**Africa Rising SAG**

**What’s good**

The SAG were very positive about the wide range of technologies being considered by the AR team, by the number of partnerships (center to center as well as other) and asked whether more funds flow to non-CG partners than in other programmes? The answer was that most of the money goes to the CG but mention was also made of the research being implemented by Africans – are they working for the CG or other organisations?

The SAG considered (from what they had heard) that there seemed to be an (appropriate) focus on livelihood systems, rather than just increased production. If true, this is welcomed.

The SAG heard how AR had the potential to influence the investment of USAID $$ for development projects and considered this was a real opportunity which should be used in the justification for further funding and indeed for the design of further research.

The inclusion of M&E from the start of the programme was considered to be a good initiative.

**What’s not so good**

It was felt that the focus of the research was still being supply-driven – technologies rather than a more holistic approach (i.e. including the enabling environment).

There still seemed to be considerable uncertainty about who can be effective in scaling up and the question was also asked as to whether priorities might change as the numbers involved increase?

While an apparent emphasis on livelihood systems was detected, it could (of course) still be wider!

**Prioritization**

The SAG considered that cost and risk information for technologies should be provided to farmers, to enable their own decision-making about what might be useful under what conditions. It could also be used as a basis for prioritization within AR.

The SAG asked who did the prioritization and were informed that it came out of diagnostic studies, but that raises the question of how to avoid a dominance of vested interests? (e.g. ILRI pushing livestock, CIMMYT maize etc.)

**Learning lessons**

The SAG was concerned that they did not hear enough about social analysis. The RAAIS tool from Wageningen could be used for example.

There is a need to assess if agricultural intensification (associated with markets?) is a viable/attractive option for resource-poor rural households without incentives, and where it is not, how can poor households be supported in taking risks, and, over what time period? This will depend on the changes being advocated.

It is good that the original proposal was strongly based on research hypotheses e.g. the one ref the adoptability of multiple technologies, but the SAG felt that now would be an appropriate time to revisit these and, if necessary, reword them into something which is testable. Overall, the SAG felt it was a good time to question assumptions underpinning the program ‘theory of change’.

**Partnerships**

While the partnership list is impressive, AR should consider additional social science partners (not just economists)

The SAG also wanted to support the team in their view that partnerships need not be permanent.

For successful partnership, there should be mutual benefit and commitment between partners and also clarity on the role of each partner

The SAG encouraged the team to think of the possibility of investing in capacity building to improve partnerships –not just the Masters and PhDs we heard about.

The need for partnerships with policy-makers who have the power to change things was emphasised

Innovative approaches to partnerships are required

Consider the rural development *community* as a partner, not just formal organisations.

**Strategic elements**

Do known gender differences constitute a problem?

Consideration of how adoption of new technologies influences women, children (+men)’s behaviour, workloads, opportunities etc

Think of social differences and not just that gender = women

SAG encouraged the team to revisit the assumptions regarding mainstreaming gender.

SAG discussion of the need for social and institutional analysis more broadly included reference to the role of IFPRI in undertaking this at the level of households and communities in addition to other levels. We were informed that IFPRI had relevant data sets, some of which were already prepared/ coded etc. for analysis, while other data sets would need cleaning etc. before they could be used. SAG members felt that more value could be gained from existing data sets: They were not entirely sympathetic with the idea that more data is better than less, just in case it comes in useful at a later date. At the same time, they acknowledged that large data sets are to-day highly valued as the means by which we can learn about ongoing changes and change processes, but observed that this value depends on continuous data analysis and interpretation.

The SAG felt it didn’t have enough information on the strategic approach being adopted to capacity building i.e. for whom and to do what?

**Scaling**

Consider agriculture in the broader development context – contributes to wider USAID objectives BUT need to link to other efforts

The SAG encouraged the team to revisit the scalability hypothesis. What can be tested?

Finally, the SAG asked what would happen when the project funding ended – is there an exit strategy?

Before ending, feedback from the SAG was generally that it was an enjoyable and informative meeting, so well done to the project team for the planning and organisation of the meeting! At the next one, the SAG would like to go into the field, with researchers.